

My legislation is particularly aimed to help middle-class families. It would enable homeowners to deduct on their Federal tax forms the amount of property and school taxes that they pay in excess of the national average. This also brings a first-of-its-kind property tax deduction to residents who use the standard deduction. The IRS estimates that two-thirds of taxpayers use the standard deduction. They would be able to get this tax relief.

Mr. Speaker, both Republican and Democrat cosponsors are on my bill. We need to move it forward to bring additional tax relief to middle-class families in New York and throughout the country.

VOTE "NO" ON OMAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

(Mr. MICHAUD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, last night several of our colleagues stood on this floor and listed all of the terrorists that are no longer threats to the United States. I couldn't be more pleased that this list of potential threats is getting shorter. So why are we going to vote today on a proposal that will add major new threats to that list?

The Oman Free Trade Agreement would require the United States to allow any Omani company to provide landside U.S. port activities if they so choose. A new CRS report confirms that fact.

We know that al Qaeda wants to launch more attacks here. Do you think that this deal presents a golden opportunity for al Qaeda to infiltrate our ports, to smuggle weapons of mass destruction into the United States?

Last year more than 11 million cargo containers entered the United States. Do you want a company in Oman managing this flow of who knows what into our borders? Would you let any company that operates in Oman run our airport security?

The Oman Free Trade Agreement hands over the keys to any company that operates in Oman. Think about it, and vote "no" on this stupid, ridiculous deal.

When the American people find out about the port provision of this agreement they will be outraged.

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PIEDMONT HEALTH CARE

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate two Georgia hospitals, Piedmont and Piedmont Fayette, which this month were named two of the Nation's Most Wired Hospitals by a Benchmarking survey.

The Piedmont health care group is known for its longstanding commitment to health information technology. With this award, the whole Nation now understands how these hospitals are using electronic medical records, e-prescribing, and digital radiology to help streamline practices and to reduce medical errors.

I am a strong supporter of health information technology because it saves lives, time, money. And as a physician, I know that encouraging the adoption of health care technology is one of the most important ways we can work to lower costs while also raising quality of care.

This is why I have introduced legislation to incentivize more physicians to adopt information technology. And I hope the success of Piedmont health care will encourage other providers to look at the real savings that this technology offers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me in congratulating Piedmont for their leadership in the field of health information technology.

HOUSE REPUBLICANS FAIL TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES OF REAL CONCERN TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, all year long House Republicans have failed to provide real leadership on issues that affect Americans. Earlier this month the Associated Press reported that President Bush had only signed two substantial bills into law this year.

And, now, House Republicans want to spend the entire week distracting and dividing our Nation with pieces of legislation that will never be signed into law. This is not what the American people sent us here to do.

They have yet to join us in offering a stand-alone vote to increase the minimum wage, which about 60 to 70 percent of people polled said they agree with.

Because of their cozy relationship with Big Oil, they have yet to provide American consumers any relief at the gas pump. In my district it is over \$3.35.

Earlier this year, House Republicans promised they would clean up the place after several Republican lobbyists pleaded guilty in the Abramoff scandal. But still we have yet to pass any final legislation.

Mr. Speaker, no wonder House Republicans are trying to distract the American public. This is not a record I would want to run on either.

FISCAL MISMANAGEMENT

(Mr. FLAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, last year's highway authorization bill, better

known as SAFETEA-LU, which brought us the bridge to nowhere, seems to be a gift that keeps on giving. It has now cleared the path for a program that may set a standard for fiscal mismanagement and favoritism by the Federal Government.

Thanks to changes made to the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing, or RRIF, program in SAFETEA-LU, the administration is considering awarding one of the largest loans to a private company in the history of the United States. This would be a \$2.5 billion loan to the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroads, or DM&E, a loan larger than the Chrysler bail-out.

SAFETEA-LU expanded the loan authority of the RRIF program from \$3.5 billion to \$35 billion and removed any prohibition on the size of any single loan, paving the way for the DM&E loan application.

If drastically expanding the program's loan authority opened the door for DM&E, a handful of other changes to the program all but drive the loan application home.

Mr. Speaker, the RRIF program is on the verge of being used to provide a competitive advantage. It is inappropriate for the taxpayers to finance it.

HOUSE REPUBLICANS ARE PREVENTING MEDICAL ADVANCES

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, the editorial in yesterday's USA Today, entitled "Bush Readies First Veto, Dashing Hopes of Millions," says it all. The editorial begins: "A quarter-century from now, when the benefits of embryonic stem cell research are finally realized, Americans are likely to shake their heads in astonishment at this week's events in Washington."

But President Bush is not the only one to blame. House Republicans had a chance to join us in overriding the President's veto. They refused. Instead, they rubber-stamped the wishes of the President and, in doing so, dashed the hopes of millions of Americans.

The legislation offered us a real opportunity to find cures for diseases such as diabetes, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cancer and MS that are currently afflicting millions of Americans. This research has been put on hold for far too long by an administration that chooses to stifle groundbreaking science.

Mr. Speaker, this was a golden opportunity for this Congress to give scientists and researchers the tools they need to save lives. House Republicans refused to join us in moving this Nation forward. The stem cell vote yesterday is the latest example of why new leadership is needed to take our country in a new direction.